

Berkeley Connect is...

In its third year as a campus-wide program, Berkeley Connect is significantly enhancing the undergraduate experience at UC Berkeley and emerging as a national model for innovation in academic mentoring. Highlights of the 2015-2016 academic year include:

- 10% increase in enrollments to 2,642
- 2 new programs with 100% satisfaction
- 84% of participants report increased sense of belonging at UC Berkeley
- 38% transfer student participants
- 25% under-represented minority participants
- 41 full-year fellowships awarded
- Proposal for future growth unveiled

Berkeley Connect is reaching more students



Berkeley Connect now operates in a total of 13 academic departments in the College of Letters & Science, College of Natural Resources, College of Environmental Design, School of Social Welfare, and the interdisciplinary Center for Computational Biology. ***In 2015-16 there were 2642 enrollments in Berkeley Connect, a 10% increase over the previous year.*** Through collaboration with Admissions, New Student Services, bridges, and other campus units, student now arrive on campus well aware of Berkeley

Connect and eager to enroll. While the program is not yet impacted, ***Berkeley Connect is now operating at 82% of total capacity, an increase from 75% in the prior year.***

In 2015-16, two new Berkeley Connect programs were launched: Computational Biology and Social Welfare. The pent-up demand for these programs was evident: ***in Fall 2015, a staggering 100% of students participating in newly launched programs reported positive satisfaction with the experience.***

Student recruitment is always a priority; this year a Berkeley Connect Student Advisory Board was formed and provided valuable feedback on student communications. They helped develop the new Berkeley Connect motto: ***You Belong Here.*** The number of work-study Communications Assistants



was doubled, and an electronic newsletter was launched to keep students and supporters apprised of program news (and to support fundraising efforts such as The Big Give).

Berkeley Connect is battling “imposter syndrome”

Some students struggle more than others to feel like they belong. That may be why **41% of Berkeley Connect participants in Fall 2015 were transfer students, and 34% in Spring 2016**. Here’s how one transfer student described the experience:

“During my first semester, I do not think I ever felt particularly safe in the quality of my academic knowledge, or even my experiences as an individual. In Berkeley Connect though, that was never the case....Berkeley Connect allowed me to not only feel comfortable amongst my peers, but to also realize that my skills, intellectual curiosity, and yearning to bond with my fellow peers would be reciprocated.”—Berkeley Connect student, Spring 2016

In 2015-2016, **25% of the students participating in Berkeley Connect were under-represented minorities**, and there was no decline in their enrollment over the course of each semester. Chicano/Latino students made up 20% of Berkeley Connect participants, compared to 16% of the overall student population. While African Americans make up only 2% of the undergraduate

population at Berkeley, 4% of Berkeley Connect participants were African American.



Berkeley Connect helps students:

- **Meet others** who share their academic interests
- **Increase their awareness** of the educational resources available to them
- **Become better prepared** to engage with their professors
- **Deepen their knowledge** of an academic discipline
- **Explore their options** for post-college careers
- **Increase their sense of belonging** at UC Berkeley
- **Increase their confidence** that they can succeed at Berkeley

Berkeley Connect is making a difference

In Spring 2016, 95% of students participating in Berkeley Connect said they would recommend the program to a friend, 94% reported positive satisfaction with the program, **84% reported that the program increased their confidence that they can succeed at Berkeley** and **83% reported an increased sense of belonging**.

(Note: because all participating students are required to complete an exit survey in order to receive a passing grade, these survey results are based not on a sample but on virtually the entire population.)

“Having a mentor to guide me through the semester and offer advice really improved my outlook on my future here at Berkeley.”—Berkeley Connect student, Fall 2015

Berkeley Connect is graduate students mentoring undergraduates

Careful analysis of assessment results shows that a sense of belonging is a strongly predictive outcome: if students feel that they belong, the other outcomes will follow. And of all the elements of the program (which include regular small-group discussion sessions, special events featuring faculty and alumni, and field trips to campus resources), the one that provides the strongest sense of belonging is the individual meetings between the participating students and their graduate student mentors. ***For 88% of participating undergraduates, the one-on-one meetings with their graduate student mentors positively increased their sense of belonging at UC Berkeley.***

“Through Berkeley Connect I was able to have a mentor who encouraged me to excel and made my transition to college much easier....Our one-on-one meetings helped me work through numerous challenges and feel much more confident with my decisions.”—Berkeley Connect student, Spring 2016

Berkeley Connect is serving graduate students as well as undergraduates

In 2015-16, **43 UC Berkeley outstanding graduate students received fellowships (full remission of in-state tuition and fees and a \$22,000 stipend) to serve as Berkeley Connect mentors.** In addition to invaluable hands-on experience working with students one-on-one and in small groups, they received mentoring from the Berkeley Connect faculty, were offered professional development workshops, and benefited from support that allowed them to advance their own research. This year a Fellows Advisory Committee was formed to support the continuous improvement of the Fellows' experience.

“I'm pleased to share that I was offered two postdoctoral fellowships after being on the academic job market for the very first time. I accepted a 3-year position at Princeton University....I highlighted Berkeley Connect in my teaching paragraph of my cover letter and I'm sure it mattered for a school like Princeton with only ~8,000 students in total and class sizes of 5-15.”—former Berkeley Connect Fellow

Berkeley Connect is managing resources carefully

Berkeley Connect is in sound fiscal health. Administrative overhead accounts for only 11% of annual expenditures. ***The largest expense (about 70% of the total budget) is graduate fellowships.*** With campus fees and student health insurance costs going up every year, tuition set to increase in the future, and restrictions being placed on the use of carried-forward funds (of which Berkeley Connect has a historical surplus), ***the difficult decision has been made to reduce the number of fellowships offered in 2016-17 from 41 to 37.*** This will not have a significant negative impact on undergraduates; fellowships were reduced strategically, based on a careful analysis of departmental enrollment trends.

Berkeley Connect is attracting attention

The Berkeley Connect mentoring model has met with widespread interest because of its unusually large scope and effective use of resources, which allows a few dozen mentors to have a positive impact on thousands of students each year. Associate Director Michele Rabkin was invited to deliver a paper on

Berkeley Connect at the International Mentoring Association conference in April 2016; unfortunately this opportunity had to be declined due to campus travel restrictions.

Berkeley Connect is poised to grow

This year Director Maura Nolan submitted “Berkeley Connect First: A Proposal to Enhance First-Year Education at UC Berkeley,” a white paper envisioning a next-level-of-magnitude expansion of Berkeley Connect, for consideration as part of the Chancellor’s Undergraduate Initiative. At the same time, individual departments and colleges continue to express interest in developing discipline-specific Berkeley Connect programs for their students.

Fundraising is crucial to the future of Berkeley Connect. Since the program began, students, faculty, departments, and donors have repeatedly called for its expansion. Alums find Berkeley Connect a compelling giving opportunity, because they remember their own struggles to belong at Cal—to find a community of like-minded peers with whom to share their intellectual passions. Giving to Berkeley Connect is like giving twice: each gift enhances the experience of Berkeley undergraduates and simultaneously supports graduate student research and professional development.

A key goal for the coming year is to coordinate and unify the campaign for Berkeley Connect. With the collaboration of the university administration and its development team, Berkeley Connect can make significant progress toward securing future funding and expanding to meet campus demand.

“This was an education of a completely different type...One that I feel has been missing from my time in college. It was a very worthwhile experience for me and I hope you continue this with other Berkeley Connect students so they can be exposed to the forms of education than many of us miss by spending our time in lecture halls and reading textbooks.”—Berkeley Connect student, Spring 2016



www.berkeleyconnect.berkeley.edu